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Mr. *SHERWILL*'s
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the
University of Cambridge.

THE
SERMON

Preached before the

University of Cambridge.



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Church-Conformity Asserted and Vindicated.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
University of CAMBRIDGE,
Upon the Feast of
St. SIMON and St. JUDE.
MDCCIII.

By THOMAS SHERWILL M. A.
and Fellow of *Christ's* College. K

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CAMBRIDGE,

Printed at the UNIVERSITY-PRESS, for Ed-
mund Jeffery, Bookseller in Cambridge. 1704.

Church-Conformity Asserted and Vindicated.

SERMON

University of CAMBRIDGE

By J. SIMON and M. JUDE.

MDCCLIII



By THOMAS SHERWILL M.A.
and Fellow of Christ's College.

CAMBRIDGE.

Printed at the University-Press, for H.
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ST. MATTHEW xxiii. *ver.* xxiii. †

These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

IT is a matter of unhappy consideration to observe, what Heats and Quarrels, what Feuds and Dissentions there are among us concerning the Discipline of the Church, Forms of Government, Modes of Worship, and the like: as if the proper and immediate Tendency of the Christian Religion were to introduce a Sword of Division, to set *the Father against the Son, the Daughter in Law* Luke 12. *against her Mother in Law*; in a word, to extirpate ^{53.} Peace and Unanimity from amongst Men.

But what renders this Consideration the more afflicting is, that the Hopes of Union seem every day to be set at a greater distance from us; partly thro' that multiplicity of Religious Sects which continually encrease upon us; but especially, if we consider, that notwithstanding the Primitive and Apostolical Constitution of our Church has been abundantly set forth, and evidently shewn by many excellent Treatises, yet at this very day doth this our Church meet with but an untoward sort of Treatment even on all hands.

In the opinion of the Separatists we labour under the imputation of Popery, Superstition, and an Impure Worship; we are charg'd as laying the greatest stress upon Circumstantials, in the mean while
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neglecting the τα βαρύτερα τῶ νόμου *the more weighty matters of the Law*, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith; an accusation as groundless as 'tis uncharitable; as if our Church had not as high a regard and esteem for the Great and Substantial Duties of Religion, as any of our Dissenting Brethren can pretend to have; or as if she did set up the Observance of Rites and Ceremonies above the practice of the Christian Law, and did fix as high a Value upon things which we own to be in their Nature indifferent, as upon the Eternal and Immutable Laws of Right Reason. No; These we acknowledge ought certainly to be done, and yet ought not the other to be left undone.

Again others there are, who openly profess indeed Communion with our Church, yet were it to be wished that they had not by oblique insinuations and actions given cause of being suspected such, as endeavour to undermine it. This we cannot but judge of them, when we hear them condemning those, who justly contend for one Form of Government before another, as Men of a Faction and Unchristian Spirit, devoid of that Love and Charity to their Brethren which the Gospel requires. It looks somewhat like a design, I wish I could not say it, of subverting, at least it discovers a great Coldness and Indifferency toward our present Establishment, when Men, as it has been obvious to observe, some have done, under a specious pretence of recommending some necessary and Essential part of Religion, for instance the Great Duty of Love and Charity, shall make it their principal aim and design to condemn and discourage that just regard and esteem that is due

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to the constitution of the Church of *England*; intimating thro' the whole series of their discourses, that an hearty concern and affection for the same is inconsistent with our Saviour's Precept of loving one another; and that a strict adherence to the Discipline and Communion of the Church, were naturally destructive of that Benevolence and Kindness we ought to shew to our Brethren. Certainly, one would think, that the Duty of Christian Love might be sufficiently enforc'd from various Topics, without pleading at the same time for Erastianism: Our Charity without doubt may be diffusive and Universal, without breaking up the Enclosures of the Church, and leaving every one at Liberty to rove as the suggestions of a wild Fancy shall carry him. This is a Notion indeed we could never have expected to hear, but from the mouth of some one of that Upstart Frantic Sect, who distinguish themselves by the name of *Philadelphians*, or the *Family of Love*.

In a word, the Duties of Justice, Mercy, Charity, Patience, Forgiveness of Injuries, and the like, are matters of an indispensable Obligation; and that of Universal Love is the true Characteristic of Christianity; yet there are other things, which tho' of a positive and temporary obligation are necessary too; not upon their own account; but in order to some good end and purpose, for securing to us some advantage or benefit not otherwise attainable; and therefore not to be omitted and neglected as things wholly useless and superfluous. The former of these we ought to do, *and not to leave the other undone*. The word *ταῦτα* *these* may indifferently relate either

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in loc.

to the first and more remote, or to the latter and more near antecedent; in either construction the sense is the same, and accordingly we find, that Expositors vary in referring it; I shall chuse with our Learned *Paraphrast*, to connect the Relative with the nearest Member of the Period, in this sense; *These, viz. the Great Duties of Judgment, Mercy, and Faith ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other, tho' matters of a far inferior nature and less needful, undone.*

Which words, as indeed the whole Chapter, are levell'd by our Saviour against the superstitious Pharisees; the main of whose Religion was meer Pomp and Outside. They were exact to a nicety in matters of less moment, as the paying *tithe of mint, anise, and cummin*; for which there was no Precept in the Law, nothing but a Traditionary Custom obliging them thereto: but as to things of the greatest weight and concern, as for the Duties of the first and second Table, they were as regardless and remiss therein, as they were observant and rigorous in the other. Hereupon our Saviour doth justly reprove them for this their præposterous practice. *These ought ye to have done*: but at the same time doth not absolve them of their Obligation to the other, *and not to leave the other undone.*

The words I shall consider, as they relate to our selves embodied in a Church, as were the Jews; and examine how far our Constitution may be concerned in this Aphorism; whether we have duly observ'd it as we ought, or whether we are deficient on the main side, as were the Scribes and Pharisees of old; or to go farther

farther yet, as some will have it: whether it may not be urg'd to our reproof in this manner. *These ought ye to have done, and to have left the other undone.*

I. As to what things are of absolute necessity to be observ'd by us, I mean, the Great Duties of the Gospel, I shall only say thus much at present, that I believe it a matter of no small difficulty for those who dislike our Communion, to instance in any Church from the Age of the Apostles down to this time, more truly Evangelical both as to Doctrine and Manners; than the Church of *England* is: There is not any thing throughout her whole Constitution that doth warrant, or give the least countenance to any Errors either in Faith or Practice. And therefore the Faults that any of her Members shall happen to be charg'd with, ought not to be alledg'd in prejudice of our Church; as if thro' her means they had been Guilty of them. That there are some, who are more solicitous for the Circumstantials, than the Essentials of Religion, and who value themselves rather upon the Name of a Church-man, than that of a Christian, is a truth too well known, I fear, to be disputed. As for such, whoever they are, they are equally obnoxious to our Saviour's reprehension with the Scribes and Pharisees: But it would be most unreasonable to fix this Character upon the whole Body of the Conformists; whereas what our Saviour charges the Pharisees with, he charges the whole Sect with. A Sect corrupted all over in Doctrines as well as Practice; accounting their Oral Traditions as Authentic and Obligatory, yea more so, than the written Word of God; and

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esteeming of their Rites and Ceremonies, as trifling and as numerous as they were, as things equally necessary to Salvation with the Great Duties of Morality. But nothing of this nature can, with any shew of Truth, be objected to us consider'd as a Church or Society of Men agreeing in such a Form of Worship; and therefore are we clear, in the first place, from that heavy Accusation the Jews lay under, of having neglected the main and necessary parts of Religion, the things which ought especially, and above all other to be done.

II. But then, secondly, what I chiefly design to insist on from these words, is to examine whether the Circumstantials of our Religion, the Form of our Government, the Manner of our Worship, the Rites and Ceremonies that are enjoyn'd are of the number of those things that ought not to be left undone, or whether, as some pretend, they are unnecessary impositions intrenching upon our Christian Liberty, and such as give Men just occasion of dividing from us. And in order hereunto I shall proceed in this Method.

First, I shall shew that some Form of Government or other, some particular Modes and Circumstances of Worship must of necessity be observed by us.

2. That if any of these matters are left undetermin'd by our Lord and his Apostles; they fall within the Magistrates Power, who may and ought, as in Prudence shall be thought best, to fix and settle them.

3. That as matters are already determin'd and settled

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tled in our Church, they are highly expedient and useful, and nothing is enjoyned, but what is innocent and inoffensive. Of these in their order, and with the utmost brevity I can.

First, Some Form of Government or other, some particular Modes and Circumstances of Religious Worship must of necessity be observ'd by us.

When our Saviour told St. *Peter* that he would build himself a Church; 'tis difficult to understand any thing else thereby, than that he design'd to incorporate all those who should profess his Religion into a Society, distinct in its Nature, Offices, Laws and Censures from all other of Humane Institution; to unite them into a Regular Body, whereof he himself would be the Head. Now in this Religious Polity, as in all other Societies and Bands of Men, we immediately discover a necessity of Order and Government, without which it is impossible that any Community should subsist as such. Were every individual Disciple of Christ left at Liberty to straggle as he pleas'd, to worship God after his own way, were nothing of Externals in Religion to be prescrib'd, and the Terms of Communion to be no other than the Terms of Salvation; what would become of that Church which our Saviour did design to erect. So far should we be from composing a Regular Religious Community, which the very Notion of a Church doth import, that instead thereof we should only be a confus'd Multitude, a disorderly Rabble of Christians.

But our blessed Lord, who is not the Author of *Confusion*, has determin'd otherwise, 'twas his full purpose

Matt. 16.
ver. 18.

1 Cor. 14.

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purpose and intent that his Followers should be form'd into a Regular Body, call'd his Church; whereof every National Christian Church is a part; requisite therefore is it that Order and Government be observ'd in the several parts of the Church Catholic, otherwise how can it be kept up in the whole?

Ephes. 4.
11, 12.

And to this end has our Lord appointed and substituted Officers under himself, subordinate to one another for the well Governing of the same. *He gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Pastours and Teachers for the perfecting of the Saints* *πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων*, for the better compacting and fitting up of Christians into a Body, *for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.* This Institution of Ministers was appointed with a design there should be a constant succession of them to the Worlds end. i. e. *Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* Whence it follows, that while as yet the Christian Church is not arriv'd at a state of Perfection, either thro' want of Unity, Knowledge, or any other advantage necessary to perfect and compleat it, there is still a need of Pastours and Teachers, and consequently there must have been a Power lodg'd with those first Ministers of Constituting others to succeed in their room, according as the Exigencies of the Church should require, either for the Office of Ruling or Instructing. And this Designation of Officers can serve to no other end, but the good Discipline and due Administration of Affairs in the Christian Church; and conse-

Ephes. 4.
13.

consequently some Form of Ecclesiastical Government must be observ'd by us, if our Lord's Institution lays any obligation upon us to regard it. Thus also, is it requisite that the Modes and Circumstances of Religious Worship be prescrib'd and settled, or there can be no such thing as a Publick Worship. The Time must be fix'd, the Place appointed, and there must be an Agreement also as to the particular Form of it; for should a number of Men assemble themselves in order to the Performance of that Solemn Part of Divine Worship, Prayer, and every one be left free to use what Form he would, the very Notion of Publick Worship must hereby be destroyed; in this case here is nothing to Constitute it such any more than had they been every one at his own private Devotions in his respective Closet. Thus we see it necessary, that the Modes and Circumstances of these things should be determin'd, and that we be oblig'd sometimes to the Observance of what is only indifferent in its own Nature, if we would preserve the very Being of a Religious Society, and keep up in the World what may truly be call'd a Publick Worship. To plead therefore, as some do, for a Universality of Protestantism, in hopes thereby of putting an End to our Divisions; if they mean, as I cannot conceive any other, that every one should be left free as to the Circumstantials of Religion, and, as I said but now; that the Terms of Communion should be the same with the Terms of Salvation, is to plead for such a Scheme of Religion, as was never yet found in any Nation of the World. It is such a Notion as is utterly incon-

sistent with, and destructive of the nature of the Christian Church, to which, as to all other Formed and Regular Societies, Government is Essential; and Government, we know, includes a Power of making Laws, and that supposeth an Obligation upon the Conscience of those who are subjected to that Power, of obeying those Laws; and if so, then there may be necessary Terms of Communion really distinct from the Terms of Salvation. Moreover yet, were this New Model of Religious Worship to be set on foot; instead of bettering our Condition it would render it yet worse: For the immediate and necessary Effect of this Latitudinarian Principle would be the introducing all manner of Confusion and Disorder; and consequently, as the Genuine Product thereof, Dissentions and Divisions. This is unavoidable unless Mankind were of one mind, which to suppose would supersede this Plea, and leave no room for it; for then the Terms of our Communion could give no offence to any, but would sit as easy upon all Men, as this New Modification in Religion is suppos'd would do. But considering Humane Nature, as we find it, diversify'd almost as much in Opinion as in outward Aspect, what Confusion will not follow upon this Notion; for suppose we a Number met together to partake of the Holy Eucharist, since 'tis hard to imagine them unanimously consenting to receive the Elements in one and the same Posture, where no particular one is prescrib'd: That disagreement which would happen amongst them would at last end in a Separation into distinct Congregations, and

and as much Discord and Contention would arise as ever; but with this remarkable difference, that as our Case now stands, there is the Authority of our Governors to engage Men to a Compliance with the Orders of the Church; there is a just and due regard also to the Peace and Quiet of that same Church, and to the present decent Establishment of Matters there to win Men over to, and continue them in our Communion; Considerations sufficient to induce all to unite, excepting some few of a Scrupulous and Tender Conscience, were it not that either the Prejudices of Education, or a Private Interest, or that strong Influence they are under from their Teachers did withhold them from examining into the Merits of the Cause, with that Freedom and Ingenuity as is requir'd in all our Pursuits after Truth. Whereas, on the other side, were Men let loose to worship after their own way, having no restraint or obligation upon them from without, the Confusion & Disorder thereupon ensuing wou'd be great, the Dissensions and Differences remediless and incurable. Some Form of Government therefore or other, some certain Modes & Circumstances of Worship must of necessity be Establish'd; but how or by whom they are to be prescrib'd & fix'd; I proceed in the next place to examine.

2. If any of these Matters are left undetermin'd by our Lord, and his Apostles, they fall within the Magistrates Power, who may and ought, as in Prudence shall be thought best, to fix and settle them. Upon this Proposition the main hinge of the Controversy turns; and if the Truth of it can be made apparent, then that Darling Principle of the Sectaries, that Fundamental

damental Maxim of Puritanism, *viz.* *That nothing ought to be establish'd in the Worship of God, but what we have express warrant for in the Holy Scriptures either by way of Example, or positive Precept,* must fall to the Ground, as having no support either from Reason or Revelation. And this I shall endeavor to evince with what Brevity and Perspicuity I can. And first, whoever argues that, because the Manner and Circumstances of Divine Worship are not particularly defin'd in the Word of God, 'tis presumptuous, and beyond the reach of Humane Authority to interpose, and determine what God has left indifferent, proceeds upon a mistaken Principle, *viz.* That the Holy Scriptures are a compleat and adequate Rule of Divine Worship. Thus far indeed they serve as a Rule, and an excellent one too; in that they give us right and worthy Conceptions of the Divine Nature, the true and only Object of Religious Worship, in that they have prescrib'd us in general what ought to be the subject Matter of our Petitions, yea taught us also how we should be dispos'd and affected when we set about the Performance of Holy Duties, and directed us to that Mediator in whose Name, and for whose sake alone our Prayers and our selves thus qualify'd, shall be heard and accepted; yet to denominate the Scriptures a compleat and adequate Rule of Divine Worship in a strict and proper sense, it had been necessary they should have descended to the prescribing us all the several Forms of Supplications that should ever be used, to the determination of Habits and Gestures, in a word, we should then have been limited as to all the circumstances

stances belonging to Divine Service: but this had been endless and impracticable, so infinitely various and mutable are these things. 'Tis sufficient, and all that can reasonably be expected, for the Scriptures to point out the main Lines and Precepts of our Duty, leaving other Matters to be determin'd, if needful, by those who are in Authority, as in Prudence they shall judge most expedient. Upon which account it is that the Ordaining of Rites and Ceremonies in the Church by those who are set over it, is no encroachment upon the Prerogative of our Lord, as Head of the Church, any more than the private Municipal Laws of any Town Corporate are an Invasion of the great Legislative Power of the Kingdom.

Neither is it repugnant, in the next place, to Scripture, that some things be establish'd in the Worship of God, for which there is no particular Precept, or Example to be found there; unless it be first prov'd, that nothing ought to obtain the force of a Law, but what is already specify'd in the Word of God; and to assert this were to destroy the Nature of all Humane Laws, the proper subject matter of which are things Indifferent, and to leave the bare name of a Magistrate without any Power or Authority belonging thereto. To say, that Christian Magistrates have only a Power of executing the Laws that Christ has already establish'd, but no Right to enjoin us the Observance of new ones in matters of Religion, is an Assertion that carries with it a sort of Repugancy: for certainly a Power of putting a Law in force, supposes a Power also of enacting any By-Laws, that shall be thought necessary for the more effectual security of that Law. But

say our Adversaries ; the use of things indifferent in the Worship of God, we acknowledge to be innocent and allowable, or rather unavoidable; but when any one shall assume a Power of confining us to such or such usages, and shall require our observance of those things, to which before we were left free; This is it that makes them unlawful. A strange and surprizing way of arguing! A Position absurd and incredible! That what is in it self Lawful, when lawfully commanded shall become Unlawful; This is to induce such a permutation into the nature of things as they are utterly incapable of. Besides, since 'tis evident that nothing can be unlawful, but what either deviates from, and is contradictory to some Law Divine, or Humane, Natural or Positive; since nothing, I say, is sinful upon the account of its being not commanded, but because it is forbidden; whenever the subject Matter of the Magistrates Injunctions is of this nature, *viz.* not forbidden, and therefore innocent; How can either that Injunction become unwarrantable, or the Obedience that is given to it be in anywise sinful? But that which seems to be the most plausible pretence against the Magistrates Power of defining in Cases Indifferent, is what they urge of that Freedom of the Christian Institution which we are advis'd to maintain and vindicate. *Stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not intangled again with the yoke of Bondage.* Whatever therefore, in matters of Religion especially, shall lay an obligation upon the Conscience where our Saviour has left it free, is to be esteem'd, say some, as a Violation of our Christian Liberty. But upon an enquiry into the true
Notion

Notion of this our Liberty, the speciousness of the pretext will soon disappear. For if the determination of a thing indifferent be an unlawful Abridgment of our Liberty, then all sort of Vows, Contracts, and Promises, where there was no obligation upon us antecedent to the making of those Vows &c. are upon the same account unjustifiable; for thereby also are we determin'd on one side, when before we were free to either. This therefore cannot certainly be the true Notion of Christian Liberty; for 'tis madness to imagine that the Christian Religion doth exempt us from the observance of Humane Laws, and at the same time enjoin us Obedience to Magistrates. It must consist in somewhat else, *viz.* in the Judgment and Opinion we are taught to have of the nature of those things that are enjoin'd us. Whoever therefore shall attempt to impose upon us the observance of any thing indifferent, as of that which is necessary in its nature, doth thereby really infringe our Freedom; which was the case of those whom *St. Paul* exhorted to *stand fast in their Liberty*. They were taught to believe that Circumcision with other Mosaical Rites were of equal necessity with the Christian Law in order to Salvation: But nothing of this nature can be charg'd upon our Church; we own that things in themselves indifferent, continue so even after their injunction; but the observance of them is not a matter indifferent; And yet, notwithstanding this necessity of observance, here is no new tie or obligation superinduc'd upon the Conscience, properly speaking, over and above what there was before; but only that general Command we were always under of rendering Obedience to our Governors.

1 Cor. 14.
40.

vernors in all things lawful, is now determin'd and apply'd to some particular matter. Upon the whole it is evident, that the Magistrate, without usurping upon the Consciences of Men, may determine them in the use of indifferent things, and ought so to do out of a regard to that Apostolical Precept, that *all things be done decently and in order*, than which there can be no more likely method of conserving Peace and Unity among us. 'Tis not to be thought, that the Governors of our Church have prescrib'd us Forms and Modes of Worship out of a meer ostentation of their Authority, or with a design of putting a yolk upon the necks of Men; but that by settling an Agreement and Uniformity in External Worship, they might at once provide both for the Decency and Solemnity thereof, and keep up also that Love and Concord in the minds of Men, at least in relation to these matters, which our Religion doth so earnestly press, and inculcate upon us, and if so, with what face either of Truth or Ingenuity can it be urg'd against our present Establishment; that Superiors had justly offended their Inferiors by unnecessary Impositions? But this brings me to the third particular.

3. That as matters are already determin'd and settled in our Church they are highly expedient and useful, and nothing is enjoyn'd but what is innocent and inoffensive. The Form of our Government is Episcopal, i. e. There is a Subordination of Ministers in the Church, a Superior Order of Men, as Bishops, presiding over others inferior, as Priests and Deacons. And this distinction of Officers, this Disparity not only of Office and Employment, but of Power also.

so, is of Divine Institution, of Apostolical and Catholic Practice. That the Apostolical Power of *Governing Churches*, and *Ordaining Elders* was not peculiar to the Persons of the Apostles themselves, but communicated to others is evident from St. Paul's entrusting *Timothy* and *Titus* with the care and inspection of the Churches of *Ephesus* and *Creet*, with the same Power of Presidency and Ordination, as he himself would have exercis'd, had not the peculiar nature of his Office requir'd his presence in other places for the propagation of the Gospel. And as to Catholic Practice, that the ancient Church did universally conform to this Model of Government, is abundantly evident from the concurrent Testimony of *Ecclesiastical Writers*. But especially from the *Ignatian Epistles*, those, I mean, mention'd by *Eusebius*, the Authority of which altho' some have thought it their Interest to dispute, and have endeavor'd to prove them *Supposititious*, yet so strenuously have they been asserted to their proper Author by the Learned Bp *Pearson*, that 'tis thought no one for the future will call them in question. If the Epistles then, that bear the name of that most Ancient Primitive Writer are really his, our Controversy with the Presbyterians about the Antiquity of this Government is at an end; they can urge nothing farther against us. It will make very little for their purpose to tell us, that the words *ἐπίσκοπος* and *πρεσβύτερος* *Bishop* and *Elder* were heretofore promiscuously used for each other; unless they also prove that, when those words were applied to the same persons, Christian Churches were under the sole Power and Government of a class of Presbyters: We will grant them, if they please, that *the Bishops and Deacons at Philippi* were no other than Presbyters and Deacons; for

Ecclef.
Hist. lib.
cap. 35, 36

Vindic. E.
pistol. Se.
Ignat.

Philip. 1.

Theodor.
in 1 Tim.
cap. 3.

Hier. com.
in Epist. ad
Titum. c.
1.

'tis well known, from a famous passage of *Theodore* which has been often cited, the sense of which is this, *That they who succeeded the Apostles in the supreme Jurisdiction over Churches were usually call'd Apostles, till in process of time that name was reserv'd to those who were more properly and eminently so, and that of Bishop was appropriated to such as before were stil'd Apostles.* This Argument therefore from the use of words, being insufficient to shew that the Churches were govern'd by a College of *Presbyters*, we assert also, that as no evidence can be produc'd from the New Testament, so neither from any Author of Antiquity in favor thereof. As for what *St. Jerome* has attempted in this cause, it will amount to no proof, and his Opinion of the Rise of Episcopacy is no less inconsistent with his own Assertions elsewhere, than with express Testimonies of more Ancient Fathers, such as were better able to acquaint us what was the Form of Church-Government in the Infancy of Christianity, than he could be; not to mention other Considerations that have been frequently urg'd to invalidate and overthrow that Conceit of his touching the Original of Episcopal Government. And what if after all there is no positive and express Command in Scripture that this Form of Government be universally observ'd; are we therefore at liberty to set up what Form we please; certainly not: For where Episcopacy doth not obtain, and yet may be had, 'tis an unaccountable deviation from Apostolical practice, and the universal consent of the Church, which if they are not allow'd equivalent to a Precept; yet it ought to be consider'd that we have the same evidence, that the derivation of Episcopal Government from the Apostles is of Divine Institution, as the Observation of the Lord's Day,

or

or the Canon of Scripture. Thus also as to Liturgies and Set Forms of Prayer; which, besides their great usefulness and expediency beyond that of Extemporary Effusions, come recommended to us by Antiquity. They were us'd in the Jewish Church, and all along in the Christian, as may appear, if not by the Liturgies that pass under the names of *St. James, St. Mark, Clement*, and others; yet by Decrees of Councils, and the Writings of the Fathers. Altho' it must be own'd in behalf of those Liturgies that several Learned Men have thought them not entirely Modern, but Ancient as to the main substance of them, tho' afterwards corrupted, or alter'd as the occasions of things did require. However, upon a concession that no Liturgy, or entire Form of Public Service can be produc'd that is of very early date, and undoubted credit; yet that stated Prayers and Hymns were of use even in the first Ages of the Church, is more than probable from divers passages in the Ancient Fathers, and other Authors; and if this be not sufficient to countenance us in the use of Forms, we have the Example of our Lord himself prescribing one to his Disciples, which, we are well assur'd, was in use amongst the Primitive Christians; so far were they from esteeming it no other than a Directory or Pattern whereby to frame their Petitions. We have also the known practice of the Reform'd Churches abroad vindicating us from singularity in this matter, and yet this our Observance, together with the Episcopal Government of our Church are alledg'd as the main and principal causes of the Separation. What hopes can there then be that a Comprehension will be of any service to the uniting us, unless we will call this a Comprehension, to yield up every particular wherein we differ, and go over to the o-

ther side? And here we shall be at a loss where to fix; since the *Presbyterians* and *Independents* are no less at variance with each other about the Form of their Government, than either of them are with the Church of *England*. But I proceed; as for the observance of any Gesture or Habit requir'd by our Church, or as to the Ceremonies we retain, never was any yet able to prove them unlawful, and so long we may fairly account them innocent, and considering also the number of them is so small, such was the Moderation of our first Reformers, they can give no just cause of offence, and therefore are inoffensive.

And now, if it has been made to appear that our Form of Church Government is prescrib'd in Scripture, and that some certain Modes of Religious Worship are of necessity to be observ'd by us; and that the Magistrate has a Power of determining these Circumstances not otherwise order'd in Scripture; and if, as they are already determin'd in our Church, they are highly expedient and useful; and nothing is enjoyn'd but what is innocent and inoffensive; then ought we all to have an hearty Concern for the Safety of this our Church, a Church whose Constitution in all respects is so well order'd, as to make it the subject of Admiration amongst Protestants abroad, and would do so at home too, did not Prejudice and the Interest of a Party, disable some, and render others unwilling to discern any thing in our Communion that can oblige them to unite with us. We ought, I say, to have a real concern for the Security and Preservation of that Church, which under the Divine Providence hath been the strongest Bulwark and Defence of the Reform'd Religion in this Nation, witness the many excellent and seasonable Discourses publish'd by the worthy Members of her
Commu-

Communion, at a time when Popery and Superstition were threatening to enter in upon us; an evident token of that sincere dislike and abhorrence our Church has of the *Romish* Corruptions, and a clear proof how unworthily she has been misrepresented, as symbolizing with them.

Let us remember also that our Church of *England* is the Preserver of Order and Solemnity in the Worship of God, the Promoter of Peace and Quiet in the State, the Propagatress of sound Doctrine, the Pillar and Support of the true Orthodox Faith. For Confirmation of this, we need but reflect upon the times of the late Rebellion, where we cannot but observe, when the Church was fallen, together with the great Patron and Defender of it, what a Deluge of Absurdities in Religion overspread the Land, what monstrous Opinions and Erroneous Doctrines were publicly vented from the Pulpit, and taught the People; as the Pamphlets of those days sufficiently testify. And when the Polity both Civil and Ecclesiastic was new modell'd, under a pretence of reducing it to a more Christian Form, instead of Order there was Confusion, instead of Government, Anarchy, instead of a Regular Community of Christians, a Tumultuous Rabble of Innovators in Religion; yea the whole Nation was no other than a *Chaos*, and never found rest till it had reassum'd its ancient Form of Government both in Church and State.

For these Reasons is it, *viz.* For preserving the People from the Errors, of Popery on the one hand, and those of the Sectaries on the other, that our Church is not over-fond of a Toleration, not out of an unwillingness to indulge a well-meaning Dissenter, but that she is truly apprehensive of what fatal and mischievous

ther side? And here we shall be at a loss where to fix; since the *Presbyterians* and *Independents* are no less at variance with each other about the Form of their Government, than either of them are with the Church of *England*. But I proceed; as for the observance of any Gesture or Habit requir'd by our Church, or as to the Ceremonies we retain, never was any yet able to prove them unlawful, and so long we may fairly account them innocent, and considering also the number of them is so small, such was the Moderation of our first Reformers, they can give no just cause of offence, and therefore are inoffensive.

And now, if it has been made to appear that our Form of Church Government is prescrib'd in Scripture, and that some certain Modes of Religious Worship are of necessity to be observ'd by us; and that the Magistrate has a Power of determining these Circumstances not otherwise order'd in Scripture; and if, as they are already determin'd in our Church, they are highly expedient and useful; and nothing is enjoyn'd but what is innocent and inoffensive; then ought we all to have an hearty Concern for the Safety of this our Church, a Church whose Constitution in all respects is so well order'd, as to make it the subject of Admiration amongst Protestants abroad, and would do so at home too, did not Prejudice and the Interest of a Party, disable some, and render others unwilling to discern any thing in our Communion that can oblige them to unite with us. We ought, I say, to have a real concern for the Security and Preservation of that Church, which under the Divine Providence hath been the strongest Bulwark and Defence of the Reform'd Religion in this Nation, witness the many excellent and seasonable Discourses publish'd by the worthy Members of her Commu-

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Consequence a long, and unlimited Toleration may at last prove to Religion and the Souls of Men. 'Tis the only visible Engine that our Enemies-of the Church of *Rome* can use, or could wish to be employ'd against us, to the Ruine and Subversion of all true Religion: For altho' it be true that no *Romish* Priest, if known to be such, is permitted by our Laws to teach in a Congregation; yet that he may not do it in disguise, is very difficult to prove, since 'tis notorious that such Wiles and Artifices, such Tricks and Devices have heretofore been made use of. And should any one attempt the like thing again in some of our Tolerated Meeting-Houses, I am apt to think, it would be no very difficult matter to possess his Auditors with what Tenets he pleas'd, considering there are two principal Causes which mightily contribute thereto. The gross Ignorance of the Vulgar, and that full implicit Faith they repose in their Teachers. Upon these not altogether groundless Fears and Jealousies is it, that our Church is not extremely desirous of a Relaxation of those Laws, much less that they be evaded which were made for her security: But since the Circumstances of our Affairs are such, that the Wisdom of our Superiors has thought it necessary, we have nothing more to do in this case, but to deprecate those Evils, which otherwise in all probability may be the certain and unavoidable Effects thereof, and to congratulate also our Church her present security, which, next to the Good Providence of God, she cannot but place in the Favour and Protection of a most Gracious Princess.

But before I dismiss this Subject, give me leave to reflect upon a common mistake tending not a little to the

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the prejudice of our Church, and to the discouragement of her best affected Members; and that is the abus'd Notion of Moderation. 'Tis common to observe, how they who approve themselves the most faithful to the Interest of the Church, and are the most Conscientious in Conforming to the Rules and Orders thereof, are Characteriz'd as Men of no Moderation, over Zealous about Trifles, and Matters of small moment and concern.

Now Moderation in the true Notion of it is a very laudable Qualification; but, as a great Master of Reason has well shewn, 'tis very unjustly and impertinently urg'd in the present case.

Vid. Norris Postscript conc. Mod.

For altho' it be certain that in things of a large and indefinite extent, Moderation must receive its measure from us, *i. e.* proportionably to the goodness of the Object should we be affected towards it; yet where the Object is already fixed and stated in due measures, there can be no room left for Moderation with relation to our concern for that Object so stated.

And this I take to be our Case; for if Moderation be interwoven in the very Constitution of our Church, how can a just esteem and value for that Constitution be blameable? In a word, let us not fear that a due regard to what the Church has prescrib'd will ever tend to the Ruine and Destruction of it; nay it must needs have the contrary effect; for when Men shall perceive us hearty and sincere in the Communion we profess, the terms whereof were never prov'd unlawful, it will induce them to think there is something in our Establishment, that is not to be contemn'd and slighted, things that are not to be left undone, and this seems to be the most

Vid. Puller's Moder. of the Ch. of Eng.

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most likely method of gaining them over to our Church, and of promoting that Unity we pray for in the Collect for this Day, with which I shall conclude.

O Almighty God, who hast built thy Church upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the Head-corner Stone; Grant us so to be joyned together in Unity of Spirit by their Doctrine, that we may be made an Holy Temple acceptable unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.



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A SERMON Preach'd

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